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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster

Report of the Secretary-General***

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 59/279, adopted by the States Members of the United Nations in January 2005 in the light of global concern over the impact of the earthquake and tsunami that struck the Indian Ocean region. The report identifies the lessons learned from the humanitarian response effort and highlights key issues that have come out of the ongoing recovery effort in the affected countries. In doing so, it examines successes and challenges specific to the earthquake-tsunami response and recovery effort, and addresses several themes universal to disaster response and recovery, such as national ownership and leadership, disaster response capacity, coordination in the relief and recovery phases, resource mobilization, civil society engagement and risk reduction. The report concludes with a set of observations and recommendations from the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly for further discussion.

* A/60/50.
** E/2005/100.
*** The report was delayed for technical reasons.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, which requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/279 of 19 January 2005 entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster", which requested the Secretary-General to report on its implementation to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, and to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2005.

II. Defining the crisis

2. On 26 December 2004 a massive earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale struck the west coast of northern Sumatra and was followed by several severe aftershocks. The earthquake, the fourth strongest in the world since 1900 and the strongest in 40 years, led to a 10-metre displacement of the seabed. It triggered a large tsunami that surged with catastrophic force across the Indian Ocean, striking the west coast of northern Sumatra within minutes and then hitting the western coastline of Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, the east coast of India and the low-lying Maldives island archipelago before reaching the coast of Africa, causing some deaths and damage in Seychelles and Somalia. Twelve countries were affected in all.

3. Approximately 240,000 people were killed by the disaster; 50,000 are missing and feared dead, and more than one million persons were displaced. In many affected areas, three times as many women were killed as men; children represented more than a third of the victims overall, and in some communities more than half. Indonesia was the country most affected, as the coastline of its Aceh Province was damaged by the initial force of the earthquake and then immediately engulfed by the tsunami. In Indonesia, Somalia and Sri Lanka the disaster took place within the context of long-standing complex crises, which had significant implications for the organization and delivery of humanitarian assistance, including, in particular, to those who had already been displaced by conflict.

4. The earthquake and tsunami predominantly affected poor coastal communities, destroying not only critical infrastructure, administrative capacity and basic services, but also key sources of livelihoods. An initial assessment undertaken by the Government of Indonesia with the support of the World Bank and the United Nations estimates that Aceh Province in Indonesia suffered 4.5 billion United States dollars ($) in damage, representing 97 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP), 78 per cent of which is comprised of small trade, farming and fisheries. The United Nations estimates that Sri Lanka suffered estimated direct losses of one billion United States dollars (4.5 per cent of GDP), including approximately $450 million in damage to the so-called "social sectors", such as housing, and nearly $300 million in damage to the tourism industry. In Maldives, the estimate of total damage has reached $470 million, or 62 per cent of the country's GDP. Economic losses were even significant in the larger and relatively well-developed economies of India, where 500 fishing villages were damaged along the Andaman coast, and in Thailand, where about 120,000 people lost their jobs in the tourism sector.

5. Six months after the disaster, the immediate survival needs of those who were directly affected have been addressed. Almost all these populations have access to adequate water supplies, although in many camps sanitation facilities are below internationally recognized minimum standards for relief situations. The clearing of debris has been largely completed along the main roads. In Sri Lanka some 30,000 provisional shelters have been built; in Indonesia 11,000 earthquake-resistant homes are under construction. As most supply lines for food and medicine have been re-established, the situation is gradually stabilizing. However, considerable and continuous seismic activity in the region — including a significant aftershock in the vicinity of Nias Island in Indonesia in late March — has caused further death and damage, has slowed recovery efforts and continues to take a psychological toll on the population. It is clear that even as the recovery phase progresses, significant humanitarian needs — particularly among women, children, minorities, migrant workers and the internally displaced — will persist for many months.

A. The initial response

6. Affected Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and local communities played a crucial role in the response. Government agencies quickly took the lead in organizing and coordinating the relief efforts, local NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers provided immediate emergency assistance and host family networks offered shelter to the homeless. National actors also provided international actors with invaluable information for initial assessments and mapping. The role of the military in cleaning debris and clearing roads was vital.

7. For example, the Government of Indonesia deployed 600 troops and transportation assets to Nanggore Aceh Darussalam to accelerate relief efforts and to work closely with international partners in relief distribution and initial damage assessments. The Government of Sri Lanka immediately placed all of its military, administrative and logistical assets at the disposal of the relief community and rapidly instituted compensation schemes for people affected by the tsunami. The Government of Thailand promptly provided health and other services to victims, while leading a massive forensic operation to identify bodies of foreign victims of the tsunami. The Government of India responded by releasing $155.56 million and 20,900 trained search and rescue personnel for carrying out immediate relief in its own affected states and union territories, and by deploying medical teams, naval ships, aircraft and several tons of relief supplies to Indonesia, Maldives and Sri Lanka. In Somalia, while the remoteness of the affected communities had an effect on the speed of the response, local communities, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Somali Red Crescent Society and NGOs were quick to address immediate needs by mobilizing in-country resources and distributing much-needed relief items. The role of the local authorities in Puntland and of community elders in the towns and villages was invaluable, as they assisted humanitarian agencies in identifying the neediest populations.

8. International assistance to tsunami-affected countries began as soon as government requests for assistance were received. Following the onset of the disaster, the Governments of Indonesia, Maldives and Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency. The Governments of Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles and Sri Lanka

formally requested international assistance. In Somalia the regional authorities of Puntland declared an emergency, and the Transitional Federal Government appealed for assistance.

9. Following the above-mentioned requests, five United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams composed of 44 disaster-response experts from 18 countries and four international organizations were deployed to five of the tsunami-affected countries. Sixteen United Nations agencies, 18 IFRC response teams, more than 160 international NGOs and countless private companies and civil society groups deployed to affected areas to provide emergency food, water and medical services to the estimated five million people in need of assistance. Some 35 countries provided military assets for the relief effort and the United Nations deployed civil-military coordination officers to key locations in the region. The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre established coordination centres in Indonesia and Sri Lanka to optimize logistics capabilities and to assist in the coordination and use of military assets. In order to facilitate the collection and flow of information among humanitarian actors, the United Nations activated the Virtual On Site Operations Coordination Centre, an online information exchange service to support real-time coordination, and set up humanitarian information centres in Indonesia and Sri Lanka to facilitate information flow. An inter-agency emergency telecommunication network was established in Indonesia to provide the communications infrastructure for coordination and operational management. The joint United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Environment Unit carried out rapid environmental assessments in collaboration with United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams in Indonesia, Maldives and Sri Lanka to identify acute environmental issues. In India the relief operations were coordinated by the Government without any external assistance; however, the United Nations disaster management team was engaged in sharing information about damages and losses with other partners, including bilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector. Within days, most communities had received assistance; however, it took up to six weeks to reach those areas where access was most difficult.

10. Immediately following the disaster, the Secretary-General appointed the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Margareta Wahlstrom, as the Special Coordinator for humanitarian assistance to tsunami-affected communities to provide leadership and support to the United Nations country team, and particularly to facilitate the delivery of international assistance through high-level consultations with the concerned Governments.

11. The disaster also generated an unprecedented display of public and private solidarity, making greater resources available for the emergency over a shorter period of time than for any other crisis. The United Nations estimates that a total of $6.8 billion has been pledged to the tsunami effort, including $5.8 billion from government sources and $1 billion (35 per cent) from corporate and private donations. Media reports indicate that at least another $1 billion has been contributed by private donors but not reported to the United Nations.

12. Some of those funds have been channelled through United Nations appeals. On 6 January 2005 the United Nations launched a flash appeal requesting $977 million in humanitarian and recovery assistance for the first six months. At a ministerial meeting held in Geneva on 11 January 2005, 25 states pledged a total of

$777 million towards the appeal as well as towards additional reconstruction activities. Fifteen days after the disaster, 60 per cent of the funds solicited in the flash appeal were committed or paid out. Following a mid-term review of the appeal in April 2005, the requirements were revised to $1,086 million. The OCHA financial tracking service estimates that in June 2005 $880 million was contributed to the appeal and a further $162 million was committed. Significantly, however, much of the tsunami funding has been contributed through non-United Nations channels, including such international organizations as the IFRC, which has reported receiving $2.2 billion, and large non-governmental organizations.

13. Such solidarity has extended to the intergovernmental level as well. On 6 January 2005 the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) convened a ministerial-level meeting in Jakarta and adopted the Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention in the Aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster on 26 December 2004, which aimed to mobilize further the international emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes. At a special session on the earthquake and tsunami held at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction on 20 January 2005, more than 160 Governments called for the development of a tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean, and meetings were held to plan the establishment of early warning capacities. On 19 January 2005, many of the concepts in the Jakarta declaration received formal and broad endorsement from Member States in General Assembly resolution 59/279 on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, which emphasized the need for the international community to maintain its focus and support to tsunami-affected countries beyond the emergency phase.

B. Early recovery

14. From the outset, the response effort included recovery activities. Within two weeks of the crisis, the United Nations dispatched recovery teams to the affected areas to begin assessing disaster damage and to support national authorities in recovery planning. In addition, the Special Coordinator for humanitarian assistance to tsunami-affected countries was accompanied by a representative from the United Nations Development Group on several visits to the region to focus immediate attention on early recovery needs and to ensure that relief programmes incorporated early recovery elements.

15. The Governments of several of the affected countries, in partnership with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations, were also to give early attention to assessing recovery and reconstruction needs and are currently in the process of finalizing medium- and long-term plans. Three months after the disaster, the Government of Indonesia unveiled its master plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh, Nias and North Sumatra and then established the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) to oversee its implementation. The formation of a dedicated government agency with a strong mandate and dynamic staff has done much to align the international community around a common set of values and standards for recovery and reconstruction programming. In Sri Lanka, a 24-month transitional strategy launched by the United Nations system in support of the Government's new post-tsunami recovery will be

unveiled at the end of July. In India, the Planning Commission of the Government of India established the Inter-Ministerial Core Group to prepare and manage a 156-week, $2.19 billion tsunami rehabilitation programme for all affected areas. In Thailand, the Government established a committee on rehabilitation management and development of the tsunami-affected countries along the Andaman coast. In Maldives, the Government has developed a detailed national recovery and reconstruction plan whose objectives include macroeconomic recovery and livelihood revival, community empowerment, environmental protection and disaster preparedness, and effective public service delivery.

16. To facilitate support for and implementation of the national plans, the Secretary-General appointed former President of the United States Bill Clinton as the Special Envoy for the Indian Ocean tsunami recovery effort. In that role, former President Clinton is working to maintain the world's attention on the tsunami operations, support coordination efforts at the country and global levels, promote transparency and accountability, and champion the kind of recovery that seizes the moral, political and financial opportunities the crisis has offered to set affected communities on a better — and safer — development path. To that end, President Clinton convened a "global consortium" of affected Governments, United Nations agencies, international organizations, international financial institutions and NGOs to improve coordination among the main actors, particularly at the country level, to facilitate the implementation of individual countries' reconstruction plans and to instil common transparency and accountability measures. The Special Envoy also visited a number of the affected countries in late May to assess progress in launching the recovery process.

III. Response successes, challenges and lessons learned

17. The Indian Ocean tsunami disaster created one of the most complex coordination and logistical challenges the disaster response system of the United Nations has ever had to manage. The timing and scale of the event required quick and flexible coordination efforts in a variety of countries and contexts, and its global reach led to a proliferation of relief actions and actors and garnered assistance from public, private and government sources at the highest levels. While such global attention and support has been both welcome and constructive, the high-intensity environment it has created has raised expectations of performance and accountability. Recognition of that context is the key to defining the challenges arising from the initial response. The following sections highlight observations and lessons learned from the response effort in five key areas.

A. National ownership and leadership

18. The fact that the disaster affected strong national Governments with well-developed national institutions and functioning legal frameworks greatly contributed to the success of relief efforts. In many areas, the relief effort benefited from robust involvement from line ministries, armed forces and the use of existing government structures, where they were in place. The collaborative relationship between the international and national relief actors and among all levels of Government ensured

greater ease in relief distribution and simplified the handover of humanitarian and early recovery activities to the appropriate government bodies.

Lessons learned

19. **Pro-active government coordination and collaboration significantly facilitated relief efforts**. In Indonesia the immediate appointment and placement in Aceh of a senior minister to coordinate response activities ensured that international and national response activities were complementary. In Sri Lanka, all parties and authorities immediately recognized the need for local-level coordination mechanisms that included the United Nations, NGOs and local representation, to ensure relief delivery and coordination in northern and eastern parts of the country. The Government of Thailand, in close collaboration with foreign Governments, was instrumental in ensuring a rapid and efficient evacuation of foreign nationals, and in coordinating international relief. The adoption by several Governments of emergency immigration procedures (visas upon arrival) and emergency customs clearance procedures accelerated the processing of relief personnel and goods in the early days of the crisis. Following the first two months, however, such procedures became increasingly complicated, resulting in the delay of many relief items and of items necessary for operations support (such as computers, telecommunication equipment, vehicles and essential aid supplies) and included some government restrictions on the use of satellite systems. Such administrative bottlenecks slowed relief efforts and impeded the effective delivery of much-needed assistance.

20. Effective national and international collaboration in disaster response would benefit from renewed engagement on mutual obligations and commitments to abide by agreements, such as the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations, and from building knowledge of the body of practice on those issues that has developed over time.

21. **Early engagement with Government at local levels ensured greater collaboration in the short and medium term**. The affected Governments did not try to centralize authority during the relief effort, but instead welcomed engagement and coordination at subnational levels to facilitate their response. For example, the open, receptive and collegial attitude of senior government officials in Aceh and in Jakarta provided the basis for a strong and cooperative relationship during the initial phase, whereby sectoral and civil-military coordination meetings took place at a local level with the full support of national authorities. In India, the Government deployed experienced administrative officers to the most affected district of Nagapatinam in the state of Tamil Nadu to coordinate relief operations locally and, in collaboration with NGOs, set up a coordination centre that operated out of the district administration office.

22. Local actors are essential to successful response coordination, yet local government structures do not always have sufficient resources to perform such coordination tasks. Productive collaboration with local institutions, therefore, requires pre-disaster preparedness planning to develop relationships with local institutions in disaster-prone areas and build their capacity where they are weak.

B. Response capacity

23. By most accounts, the United Nations disaster response system functioned well: established emergency response networks and tools were quickly deployed and assistance teams reached all affected areas within the first six weeks. No epidemics or major outbreaks of disease took place, close to two million people received emergency medical assistance and an equal number received food aid. School supplies were distributed to more than 700,000 children, and most children in affected areas quickly went back in school.

24. However, the response suffered from gaps in certain sectors — shelter, water and sanitation — owing in large part to the sheer magnitude of the problem but also to the inability of the system to quickly field and maintain a cadre of sufficiently skilled and experienced staff. The response also suffered from a high turnover of United Nations staff and the delayed deployment of some critical United Nations common humanitarian services, particularly information management, communications and civil-military capacity, complicating coordination in the early days.

Lessons learned

25. **Significant gaps in sectoral capacity continue to impede response efforts**. Recurrent gaps in the system's ability to provide adequate clean water, shelter and appropriate sanitation facilities continue to impede a rapid humanitarian response. There is therefore a need to reinvest in developing and maintaining systemic capacity for humanitarian response by increasing and strengthening professional staffing and administration in key sectors, and by forming and supporting strategic partnerships that tap into NGO capacity and draw on existing expertise of local and regional organizations. In that regard, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has launched a system-wide humanitarian response review to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the current system and make practical recommendations as to how weaknesses might be addressed. The results of the review are scheduled to be available in June.

26. **The immediate and strategic deployment of common services is essential to ensuring effective response**. The fielding of United Nations Joint Logistics Centre staff as members of United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams was instrumental in jump-starting critical logistics tasks. However, civil-military coordination officers of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and humanitarian information centres were not activated as part of rapid response mechanisms but were deployed through more formal channels and were therefore delayed. The mobilization of telecommunication systems was difficult, and data collection, analysis and dissemination suffered from a lack of standards and systems. Such challenges may be addressed by United Nations recognition of the strategic value of such services during the earliest phase of a crisis and by the development of the mechanisms and standards that allow early deployment of common humanitarian services

27. Rapid response capacity could also be strengthened by the formation of a standing global response capacity under the auspices of the United Nations, with immediate responsibility and authority to engineer the initial response. Such a system might also involve the development of regional capacities, particularly in

disaster-prone regions, so that relief teams and supplies can be employed more quickly and with a better understanding of local contexts. Initiatives such as the ongoing efforts by the Organization to expand the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination roster and the request by Indonesia to ASEAN (ASEAN) for a military assets rapid response mechanism for disasters in the region should be encouraged.

C. Coordination tactics and tools

28. Establishing effective response coordination mechanisms was one of the greatest challenges of the response effort. However, overall, coordination at the international, national and regional levels went well: standby arrangements with donors and the private sector to provide staff, equipment, transport and other assistance enhanced the timeliness of the response; the assistance of the military — national and international — was instrumental in early aid delivery; and the early deployment of senior United Nations staff to the Indian Ocean region also increased the effectiveness of coordination.

29. Coordination was not always smooth, however. Some areas were flooded with relief items and with actors who did not have the capacity to assist. In other areas the assistance provided did not match needs. Quickly establishing appropriate coordination structures with the variety of actors that arrived on the scene proved difficult in many cases. The resulting "humanitarian traffic jam" at times led to poor communication, ad hoc planning, and assistance delays, and the United Nations field-level leadership did not always have the support necessary to assist the Governments in carrying out strategic coordination functions.

Lessons learned

30. **Leadership and coordination should be adequately supported at the field level**. While the Emergency Relief Coordinator provided effective management and strategic thinking at the headquarters level, such critical functions were not as well supported in the field. In many cases, the resident/humanitarian coordinator lacked the staff resources to be able to perform the leadership and coordination functions required for such a large-scale response. The fact that the Special Coordinator for humanitarian assistance to tsunami-affected countries was able to act as a mobile support unit to the resident/humanitarian coordinators highlighted the need for such support at a field level. It is critical that the resident/humanitarian coordinator be immediately supported with staff and capacity for critical coordination functions and with the capacity to begin recovery activities from the outset as well as being explicitly highlighted as part of the initial funding appeal.

31. **Improved civil-military relations are required to ensure a better match of humanitarian needs and requests with military capability**. The quick and generous contribution of assets and personnel by the military of many countries, including the affected Governments, was key to accessing hard-to-reach populations and filled many of the technical gaps civilian capabilities could not provide. However, in some cases, the activities of civilian and military actors overlapped. As a result, relief goods were not always distributed in the right form and quantity and where they were most needed, and parallel relief pipelines ensued. The situation was further compounded by insufficient understanding of military command structures

and by inadequate information sharing between the humanitarian community and the military. Ensuring the most effective use of military and civil defence assets requires well-defined roles and responsibilities, clear channels of communication, and respect for and an appropriate level of sensitivity to humanitarian principles. Given the above, there is a need to improve the civil-military coordination operational framework.

D. Resource mobilization

32. The tsunami generated an extraordinary display of solidarity, making enormous resources available quickly and generating new sources of funding from the private and business community. While such a response allowed the humanitarian community to operate without focusing on fund-raising, the high-stakes financial environment such generosity created put pressure on humanitarian organizations to spend funds quickly and raised the bar for how such spending — and its impact — is reported to both donors and recipients. This has been further complicated, in some cases, by the fact that contributions have far exceeded the capacity of many organizations to spend them in the response phase. As a result, organizations have had to consider rapidly their own planning for the medium term and develop strategies quickly for reporting and communicating the use of those funds.

Lessons learned

33. **Improvements in the type and style of reporting and accountability are critical if the participation of new constituencies in future emergencies is to be maintained**. Although the humanitarian system's internal and external accountability mechanisms are well-established, the unprecedented volume of funds pledged or contributed for the tsunami, particularly from the private sector, has increased scrutiny over how such funds are spent. This led to an agreement between the United Nations and PricewaterhouseCoopers for the pro bono use of 8,000 hours of professional services to assist the United Nations with its immediate accounting and tracking of contributions raised under the tsunami flash appeal and with the expansion of its existing financial tracking systems for emergency appeals to fit the requirements of the new funding environment. Such improvements are critical to increasing confidence and support from both Governments and the private sector, now and in future crises. However, the value of such a system depends on the cooperation of all entities concerned, both within and outside the United Nations system, particularly in the provision of information about their allocation and expenditures in a timely manner.

34. Moreover, the spontaneous giving witnessed in the aftermath of the tsunami has put many humanitarian agencies and organizations in the unusual position of holding an exceptionally generous reserve of relief funding. In some cases, agencies are considering how to support the activities of other organizations in same sectors. Other organizations have stopped receiving tsunami funds, requesting potential donors to direct their contributions to other crises. Still others have been able to incorporate the tsunami funding into long-term reconstruction plans. In order to maintain public trust, humanitarian organizations, irrespective of how they choose to handle such funds, should communicate their intentions in a transparent way.

35. **Large amounts of resources require strengthened local-level coordination**. Driven by huge amounts of resources and the pressure from donors to act, many organizations responded to the crisis by initiating simultaneous, multiple relief projects and executed them with large numbers of staff, complicating coordination in many areas. In the rush for rapid action, many international actors were also perceived as neglecting their national and local counterparts and failing to take the local context into account. Coordination is crucial in such cases, and must involve donors, NGOs and national counterparts.

E. Displacement and protection challenges

36. In the aftermath of the tsunami, an estimated one million people were displaced in a relatively short period of time. After the first few weeks, however, the large numbers of temporarily displaced persons began to diminish as the situation stabilized and people started returning to their home areas. The fluidity with which displaced populations moved (particularly in Aceh), the increasing strain on host families and the destruction of livelihoods challenged the national authorities' and the international community's ability to develop a response tailored to the needs of different categories of populations and raised concerns about the potential for sexual and gender-based violence, including the possibility for kidnapping or the recruitment of children into fighting forces. Initiatives to temporarily relocate populations were further complicated by the political situation in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and by previous relocation initiatives in the Maldives.

Lessons learned

37. **Addressing the particular needs of the internally displaced in the initial response phase is critical.** The immediate relief phase of any sudden-onset disaster should focus on responding to the urgent, life-saving needs of as many people as possible. That includes addressing the specific protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons and involving them in relief planning from the outset so as to ensure the equitable distribution of aid and so as not to reinforce pre-existing inequalities. Special measures for the assistance and protection of internally displaced persons and host families should therefore be ensured and should be included in the programming and implementation of projects.

38. **An early focus on specifically vulnerable categories of the disaster-affected population is required**. Internally displaced persons have special needs, not only for assistance but also for protection. In the wake of the tsunami, specific fears were raised about protection of women and children and the risk of sexual violence and trafficking. There were early fears that sexual, gender-based and domestic violence, significant problems in some of the affected countries before the tsunami, might escalate as the loss of family members, livelihoods and mental strain would put additional stress on affected individuals. While there were reports of abuse, they remained limited in number, and considerable attention was paid to ways to avoid the risk as well as protect especially vulnerable persons. Early advocacy and vigilance in child protection by Governments helped prevent trafficking and exploitation of children, a fear that generated a great deal of attention in the early stages of the emergency. Advocacy with respect to good adoption measures was also important. As the response effort moves into a recovery phase, addressing the

difficult issues of land rights, documentation and compensation will become increasingly important.

39. **The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement should be extended to natural disasters**. During the past few years, much work has been put into creating a generally accepted international standard for the protection and assistance of the displaced, based on the experience of massive displacement in war and conflict situations. While it is acknowledged that the Guiding Principles do not reflect the particular situation arising from short-term and massive displacement by natural disasters, their general guidelines deserve to be used as a standard. However, while the Guiding Principles can be helpful in asking the right questions, they are not likely to provide the same answers everywhere. Adequately assisting internally displaced persons requires knowledge and understanding of the specific context in which the disaster occurred.

IV. Post-disaster recovery: successes, current and future challenges

40. Managing the transition from relief to recovery in the tsunami disaster is a critical concern for the future, as it includes (a) identifying lingering gaps and vulnerabilities; (b) aligning resource requirements and uses; (c) ensuring overall operational coherence across actors, activities and phases; (d) building linkages across humanitarian and development initiatives; and (e) undertaking risk reduction as a conscious part of recovery. Failure to build and sustain the momentum and support for all of the preceding activities will squander an important opportunity to rebuild critical infrastructure while simultaneously improving the lives and livelihoods of those affected and building national and local capacity to prepare for future disasters.

41. The pace of transition to recovery has and will continue to vary from country to country, requiring different approaches to the recovery effort. Recent reports from the field suggest that the impact of early recovery efforts is indeed uneven. The Government of Sri Lanka, for example, is reporting that about 17,300 families made homeless by the tsunami still live in 100 camps. Of those, 9,480 families live in tents, particularly in those coastal areas where available land away from the coastline is scarce. However, construction of transitional shelters is gaining momentum (31,000 in June), so it is hoped that those numbers will be significantly reduced in the short term. In Aceh, the continuing movement of internally displaced persons between various shelter options reflects attempts by the population to best align themselves for the start of the recovery phase and to have access to reconstruction assets and materials as quickly as possible. Work now being initiated by the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency aims to ensure that affected populations understand how the reconstruction process will succeed and what role they can play in it.

42. As the recovery effort moves forward in all of the affected countries, it will become critical to sustain support to the affected Governments and communities for such recovery activities and to align recovery programming as well as Government and community priorities with an awareness of the existing socio-economic situation. The following sections examine the broad issues and challenges that have surfaced in the early stages of the recovery phase.

A. Early government ownership

43. Early national ownership of and participation in the design and implementation of recovery programmes is essential, not only for the achievement of the desired impact of recovery efforts but also to strengthen capacities on the ground. Participation by local disaster management experts and technicians will help ensure that recovery programming considers the needs and capacities of the affected population, and involvement of national decision makers is critical to building consensus around recovery priorities, roles, responsibilities and resources.

44. To ensure that such ownership takes hold, external support must build up local actors and institutions through the transfer of technology and know-how and through public education. Support provided to the Government of Indonesia by international actors has included planning, mapping, shelter and employment development at the national, provincial and district levels. In Sri Lanka international teams have supported needs assessments and data collection. In India, post-tsunami humanitarian and recovery operations were boosted by close collaboration among government authorities, local communities and Indian United Nations volunteers. Indian United Nations volunteers were also assigned to assist the recovery programming and implementation in Maldives and Sri Lanka, and reportedly have been instrumental in accelerating early recovery efforts. In Thailand, national task forces were established to work with their international counterparts and follow-up on critical issues in the recovery phase. However, greater support and field-level coordination between national and international partners for the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, including longer-term strategic planning, is needed.

B. A focus on recovery during the relief phase

45. The early attention to recovery in the relief phase of the emergency helped local populations get back on their feet. For example, in Indonesia, rubble removal operations undertaken under the concept of "cash for work" injected cash into the local economy, while also providing a psychological boost to the participating population of some 11,000 people.

46. However, in many areas, early recovery was not possible as damage to roads posed a problem for the early transportation and delivery of reconstruction materials. Enhanced arrangements with private contractors and standby partners with advanced logistical capabilities and air services would assist in overcoming such recovery difficulties in the early stages. There is also currently a vacuum within the United Nations system for accepted, system-wide mechanisms for post-disaster recovery, particularly those with a risk reduction focus. Gaps in areas, such as suitable assessment methodologies for identifying early recovery needs and predictable mechanisms for the deployment of technical experts to support recovery planning and programming and for funding key recovery and vulnerability reduction interventions in a timely fashion, have been identified as major shortcomings in the effort to close the gap between relief and development.

C. Coordination

47. There have been several key achievements in sectoral coordination among international and national actors in the early recovery phase. Sectoral coordination in the reconstruction phase, led by the Governments of Indonesia and Sri Lanka with the assistance of the World Bank, ADB, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, resulted in the development of national reconstruction plans, which have mapped out all reconstruction actors and activities into a coherent strategy. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has assisted relevant line ministries and development banks in the preparation of their reconstruction plans in the agriculture and fisheries sector. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR (UNHCR), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the International Organization for Migration worked together to link the transitional shelter strategy with permanent housing schemes. UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also conducted joint missions to assess the sexual and gender-based violence problems in the temporary government camps and devised a joint response plan. In Myanmar, coordination of sectoral activities proved efficient, thanks to an innovative joint coordination mechanism spearheaded by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the United Nations. In India, UNICEF has worked to bring together international and national NGOs to discuss water and sanitation issues at the national level as well as in Tamil Nadu. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction have worked closely together with national agencies to build the institutional and technical foundations for a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean region.

48. Despite such achievements, overall coordination of disaster recovery requires additional study and work. While disaster **response** is guided by clear and universally accepted coordination standards and tools, disaster **recovery** — which involves a wider range of actors — does not benefit from any formal overarching coordination structures. This is particularly true for international coordination at the country level and is compounded by the fact that resident coordinators do not have adequate support to fulfil their coordinating role. Recognizing the gap, the United Nations is currently using the occasion of the tsunami to identify what support is needed to improve coordination in disaster recovery.

D. Civil society engagement

49. The contributions of civil society during both the humanitarian assistance and the recovery phases have been unprecedented in many of the affected countries. Civil society groups in Thailand were essential to organizing recovery operations in cooperation with local governments and national authorities and to drawing attention to those who might otherwise have been overlooked, such as migrant workers from Myanmar and Moken sea nomads. In Indonesia, the Aceh Recovery Forum provided support and advice to the Government, the United Nations and the international financing institutions in the development of the Government's master plan for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Wide-ranging consultations with civil society in Aceh further enhanced the credibility of the planning process.

50. However, while it is widely understood that recovery programming must be based on the sound and participatory assessments of needs and capacities of the affected population, this has not always happened in practice. In several countries, concerns were raised by the affected populations about their lack of involvement in recovery planning. With the support of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, decentralized capacities that promote participatory approaches to recovery are now being strengthened. Through that approach, it is hoped that sensitive issues, such as those regarding land rights, as well as the special vulnerabilities of minorities and migrant populations can be addressed.

E. Flexible and innovative fund-raising

51. Past experience suggests that funds that are readily forthcoming when a disaster dominates the news dry up later as attention wanes. That was the case following the earthquake in Bam, Iran in December 2003 and after Hurricane Mitch in October 1998, when only a small percentage of the hundreds of millions of dollars needed was ever pledged or paid out.

52. Recognizing that the window of opportunity for disaster fund-raising is narrow and short lived, the scope of the tsunami flash appeal was extended into the recovery phase, making it possible to raise resources for shelter, livelihood development, micro-infrastructure and the environment, and allowing the implementation of recovery plans and programmes without delay. Though the cash-rich environment the tsunami created made such flexibility possible, extending flash appeals to cover recovery needs should be considered a best practice for future disasters.

53. In addition, the fact that in many cases tsunami contributions are being applied to medium-term projects should help accelerate the recovery effort. With an estimated $6.8 billion pledged to the tsunami emergency, representing roughly half of the total reconstruction needs of all affected countries, the focus is therefore not on raising more money for recovery but on the implementation of the recovery plans. The recovery effort will also benefit from the efforts of the Global Consortium, convened by former President Clinton, which has been given the task of following up on recovery plans, keeping the momentum of reconstruction high and working with Governments to deal with the difficult policy and operational issues that typically stall recovery. The development of a common financial tracking database that aims to capture all forms of assistance, including official aid, NGO support and private sector contributions in one coherent system, will also facilitate recovery planning and implementation.

F. Early incorporation of risk reduction measures

54. In the recovery effort, all of the affected countries have been struggling to balance the need for rapid recovery with the importance of protecting their citizens from future disasters. Too often, societies affected by a major disaster tend to seek rapid and visible initiatives to restore normalcy, frequently at the cost of more sustainable and durable solutions. Failure to factor risk reduction into development policies, strategies and plans can result in large-scale disaster loss, increasing and costly demands on national and international humanitarian assistance and the

systematic erosion of economic growth and social welfare. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held from 18 to 22 January 2005, just a few weeks after the tsunami, provided timely guidance in that respect, through the launch of the long-negotiated intergovernmental agenda of priorities for action on disaster risk reduction, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, on building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.

55. Although it is generally accepted that it would have been impossible to prepare adequately for an event of such magnitude, it is nevertheless clear that effective early warning systems, including preparedness measures, could have saved thousands of lives. For example, the Government of India, following the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, has been strengthening its capacity for disaster risk management at all levels for the last several years. As a result, when the tsunami struck Tamil Nadu, the villagers in one coastal district — who had received training in rescue operations and first aid under the disaster risk management programme — were able to save more than 100 lives. In this way, the tsunami has been instrumental in highlighting the need to empower communities at risk to protect themselves and their property from the impact of disasters. Developing community-based disaster preparedness plans — from stockpiling food and medicine, to building embankments in flood-prone areas and to including preparedness as part of teacher training and school curricula — would minimize the risk substantially. Further emphasis is also needed on building capacities for "end-to-end" early warning systems that include physical measures (earthquake-resistant structures, shelters, escape routes), preparedness plans and communications strategies that allow for quick and concrete action once warnings are issued.

V. Implications for future action and recommendations of the Secretary-General

Improve structures for national and international field response to major sudden-onset emergencies

56. Emergency response in sudden-onset disasters requires a commitment to further develop and coordinate rapid-response capacities and those common services that are instrumental in the immediate response phase. This includes reinforcing deployable capacity that does — or did — exist in disaster-prone countries. In addition, international response efforts would greatly benefit from strengthened field-level management for large-scale emergencies.

57. The United Nations, Governments and relevant civil society groups should commit to building and re-establishing regional, national and local disaster response capacities so that the humanitarian system has immediate access to deployable resources, particularly in disaster-prone areas.

58. The United Nations should expand and sustain its essential common humanitarian services so that they can be deployed predictably and with the right combination of skills.

59. The United Nations should develop a more unified field-level management structure to ensure response efforts are well coordinated and therefore effective. This includes strengthening support to resident/humanitarian coordinators.

Develop regional response capacity

60. Regional organizations are best equipped to respond with speed to a major disaster, benefiting from local knowledge and prior relationships with national decision makers. The United Nations should cooperate with regional organizations in disaster-prone regions so as to ensure that regional response plans and capacities are established and in place before a disaster strikes.

61. The international community should develop improved mechanisms for the deployment of regional standby capacities under the leadership of the United Nations, for example through pre-disaster agreements with regional organizations and the development of standard operating procedures for their deployment and coordination processes.

62. Governments should make their existing disaster response capacity available to such structures.

Build coherence within the civil-military response

63. The response to the tsunami by the military of different countries was unprecedented and critical to the initial life-saving and stabilization phase of the response. The tsunami was a watershed event in that respect. It is therefore likely that in future disaster-driven emergencies, military assets will be made available by States very quickly and in significant quantities. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the enormous capacity of the military contributes to the response in disasters, including establishing and better communicating accepted coordination procedures and structures between militaries and between military and humanitarian partners.

64. The United Nations should strengthen the procedures for the use and coordination of military assets in disaster response and develop more systematic links with major providers.

65. Recognizing that national military, civil defence and fire and rescue services are often the first responders, the disaster response community should actively engage those groups in determining when and how they can cooperate in disaster response.

Invest in early warning and preparedness

66. It is now widely recognized that the adoption of a regional tsunami early warning system could have saved thousands of lives. A regional system, however, will work only if it forms part of an "end-to-end" solution reaching the communities at risk and if it is supported by appropriate legal and institutional frameworks and local warning and emergency response systems. The United Nations should seek to foster regional frameworks and mechanisms for early warning systems as well as support technical and policy efforts for integrated risk management, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

67. The international community should invest in systematic, people-centred early warning systems for all hazards and all countries and to reach all those at risk. They should include risk assessments, awareness raising and preparedness measures so that communities are ready and able to act upon warnings.

Enhance the coordination and capacity of the United Nations system for recovery

68. Strengthening the ability of the United Nations to support the affected Governments while coordinating its own humanitarian and recovery activities is essential to an effective recovery. Though coordination of emergency response is led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and undertaken at the field level by humanitarian coordinators, there is no institutional equivalent or support at either headquarters or in the field for the recovery phase. Addressing such gaps includes identifying an institutional mechanism to provide leadership and coordination at headquarters and Government levels, creating greater synergies between the resident and humanitarian coordinator role in the reconstruction phase and strengthening the United Nations country team.

69. Recognizing the institutional, coordination and strategic planning gap that exists in disaster recovery, the United Nations system should support ongoing initiatives to identify the support that is needed to improve coordination of disaster recovery efforts.

Promote financial transparency and accountability

70. The increasing magnitude of disasters — and, consequently, of the scope of the response and recovery effort, — means that the United Nations will play a larger role in ensuring financial transparency and accountability in the use of funds. Strengthening and maintaining a transparent financial tracking system for both government and private contributions inside and outside global appeals will be essential. The system will also better incorporate private actions into coordination structures and financial tracking and engage key private sector actors in resource mobilization and coordination efforts. Initiatives, such as the financial tracking system developed with the assistance of PricewaterhouseCoopers should be encouraged. International organizations and Governments should also work together to strengthen the reporting and accountability mechanisms in the recovery and reconstruction phases.

71. The international community should encourage the development of a common mechanism within the United Nations system for the tracking and reporting of humanitarian funds and should urge organizations both within and outside the United Nations system to contribute to such mechanisms in a timely way.

72. International organizations and Governments should work together to strengthen the reporting and accountability mechanisms in recovery and reconstruction phases.

Commit to reducing vulnerability and risk

73. In spite of the compelling evidence linking risk reduction and sustainable development, commitment to and investment in vulnerability and risk reduction continues to be a challenge. Long-term support for sustainable economic development, resulting in strong civil societies as well as sound infrastructure, will help ensure that nations are prepared to weather the shocks from natural hazards.

74. The international community should commit to and invest in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

Promote research and learning to guide recovery activities

75. Response and recovery programming must be based upon a sound, participatory assessment of the needs and capacities of the affected population, so that local initiatives, resources and capacities are fully understood and utilized. National policy development and consultation mechanisms and priority setting activities contribute to building consensus on recovery priorities, roles, responsibilities and resources.

76. The disaster response community should capture, consolidate and disseminate a body of knowledge on the lessons learned from the tsunami and other recent disasters that promotes institutional learning at all levels and guides future disaster management.